



MEETING MINUTES

Illinois High-Speed Rail Commission
Webinar | July 12, 2023

Location:

IDOT Headquarters, 2300 S Dirksen Parkway, Room 347, Springfield, IL 62764

IDOT Office of Intermodal Project Implementation, 69 W. Washington Street, Suite 2100,
Chicago, IL 60602

Virtual Webex Webinar Meeting option available

Meeting Date:

Wednesday, July 12, 2023

Time:

10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Commission Member Attendees:

- Gia Biagi – City of Chicago
- Tim Butler – Illinois Railroad Association
- James Derwinski – Commuter Rail Board
- Becky Gillam – Senator Don DeWitte’s Office
- Michael Paul Dunn Jr. – Region I Planning Council
- Karl P. Gnadt – Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District
- Robert Guy, III – SMART-TD
- Richard Harnish – High Speed Rail Alliance
- Raymond Lai – McLean County Regional Planning Commission
- Jason Osborn – Illinois Department of Transportation
- Brian Shanahan – Transportation Communications Union
- Senator Steve Stadelman-Senate
- Brian Vercruysse – Illinois Commerce Commission
- James Wild – East-West Gateway Council of Governments

Non-Commission Member Attendees:

- Michael Vanderhoof – Illinois Department of Transportation
- Janel Veile – Illinois Department of Transportation
- Shane Cullen – Illinois Department of Transportation
- Tim McMahon – Illinois Department of Transportation

- Amanda Lundeen – Illinois Department of Transportation
- Brad Franke – Illinois Department of Transportation
- Berenice Alvarez – Morreale Communications
- Mary McIlvain – Morreale Communications
- Chloe Meek –Morreale Communications

Commission Members Not in Attendance:

- Representative Martin J. Moylan-House
- Erin Aleman – Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
- Cassaundra Rouse – Illinois State Highway Toll Authority
- P.S. Sriraj – University of Illinois Chicago

OVERVIEW OF MEETING

I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Michael Vanderhoof from IDOT welcomed everyone attending in-person and online, followed by a roll call in which Mr. Vanderhoof confirmed there was a quorum as the number of commission members present in both IDOT locations was met. Mr. Vanderhoof presented an overview of the agenda.

II. MINUTES APPROVAL

Meeting minutes from the May 30th Commission meeting were supplied on July 7, 2023. The commission members were asked if there were any requested changes to the minutes.

- **There was a request to add “for the High-Speed Line” in the following sentence.**
 - “Mr. Harnish mentioned that the biggest cost items **for the High-Speed Rail** are getting from McCormick Place to O’Hare and getting from East St. Louis to St. Louis. He believes we should start from McCormick Place to East St. Louis.”
- **A commission member requested an edit to** “the council will be commissioned from the Cook County Regional Planning Commission.”

The edits were not opposed by commission members. Approved minutes will be posted on the website.

III. OPEN MEETINGS ACT TRAINING

Janel Veile from IDOT went over how to participate in the Open Meetings Act online training. The training must be completed by the next meeting date and the certificate should be sent to Janel Veile. The training is required to serve on the commission.

IV. BY-LAWS

Michael Vanderhoof from IDOT led the discussion of the draft by-laws.

- **Mr. Vanderhoof noted that Erin Aleman’s comment on allowing the use of alternates will be addressed.**

- **Administrative Support**

- A commission member asked if the website needs to be spelled out and if the file and communication structure needs to be established in the by-laws.
 - Commission members noted that URLs and file structures can change over time.
 - Brian Vercruysse from the Illinois Commerce Commission stated that the initial thought behind the section was to identify administrative support and agreed that the sections are not needed.
- A commission member noted it would be helpful to clarify what IDOT's role is.
- Commission members agreed to remove the website and file and communication structure specificity.

- **Membership**

- A commission member noted that there has been a request for the Commission to allow alternates.
- The location of where this will be included in the by-laws is to be determined.
- Commission members discussed if the alternates could vote on behalf of the appointed member.
- Amanda Lundeen from IDOT will confirm if a proxy vote is allowed under state law and legislation.
- There was a discussion on how the alternates will be written into the by-laws.
- A commission member noted that the proxy designee should be identified on an alternate list.
- Commission members agreed to allow alternates and allow a proxy vote.

- **Duties of the Commission**

- A commission member noted that the language in this section is mainly from the statute but is missing the ridership study portion. The commission member emphasized that the language of the duties of the Commission should be spelled out as it is in the statute.
- A commission member stated that the Commission is required to give annual reports and as part of the legislation the Commission shall create a statewide plan. The commission member asked, does the plan get submitted as part of the annual report or how does it work?
 - A commission member responded that it was up to the Commission to decide what the report is and whether there is a plan completed before December 31st.

- **Conducting Business**

- A commission member asked if the annual report or a plan is put forth should the vote be the majority of the commission members and not the majority of those who are in attendance.
 - A commission member responded it should be read as a quorum and not a majority in attendance.
 - Commission members discussed how it would be written in the by-laws and how proxies would be taken into consideration.

- **Meetings**

- A commission member asked if there should be a process for requesting a meeting.
 - It will be drafted in the by-laws that 3 commission members can request the Chair for a meeting.
 - The commission members discussed who will assist in the preparation and distribution of the meeting agenda. Members agreed that the agenda will be posted electronically.
- **Commission Officers**
 - A commission member asked if the members want to formally establish any duties for the Vice Chair or have the Vice Chair function on behalf of the Chair if they are absent.
 - As a note to the Commission, the Chair should review Robert's Rule.
- **Extended Discussion on Public Comment**
 - Commission members were asked if members could/should respond to public comments during the meetings.
 - Amanda Lundeen from IDOT states that the Commission should take care in their response and not be inclined to respond in the moment without giving due thought. She does not think there should be a complete prohibition on responding to public comment.
 - There was a consensus on responding on a case-by-case basis and as approved by the Commission.
 - The language in this section will be further developed.
- **Committees**
 - Current language in the by-laws states the commission **may** form committees but it also states the 6 **proposed** committees. Commission members discussed the contradiction and there was consensus to remove the specificity of the proposed committees.
 - There was discussion about subcommittees conducting business and what would be considered a majority in this context.
- **Rule Making**
 - There was a comment about removing Article 7 on rulemaking and adopting rules.
 - There was consensus that this would not apply to the Commission.
- **Adoption of By-Laws**
 - The commission members agreed the by-laws should be adopted with the majority of commission members.

Following the review of the by-laws, the updated version will be circulated to commission members in advance of the next meeting. A vote from the majority of the appointed members will be needed to adopt the by-laws.

V. ELECTION

Jim Derwinski from the Commuter Rail Board and Richard Harnish from the High-Speed Rail Alliance are running for Chair of the Commission. To facilitate the election, live voting took place using Mentimeter. Online members were sent an email code to participate. The two candidates spoke about their experience and why they would be a good fit as Chair.

- **Mr. Derwinski said**, “I’ve been railroading now for 30 years in Northeast Illinois. As part of my roles and responsibilities as CEO, I represent the entire commuter rail coalition in the United States, an organization formed to advocate for commuter railroads. I seat currently as Chair of Commuter Railroads at APTA and clearly support rail. I believe high-speed rail is something that in the U.S. we miss the boat of back in the 1940s as we were coming out of the war and everybody else in the world did it right. I think our experience here with working with the freight railroads is really the hamstrings to moving the high-speed rail forward. My background with working with the now six-class daily gives me a unique opportunity of operations to get high-speed trains up and running.”
- **Mr. Harnish said**, “I’ve studied high-speed rail for many years, and I helped form the High-Speed Rail Alliance. I put a lot of thought into what the state needs to do to reconnect itself and have stronger connections between communities. I think this Commission has a wonderful opportunity to change the discussion not only about how we connect with cities but how we remake transit. With the issues around transit and rail funding, I’d like to play a strong role in helping us get a lot more funding for passenger rail throughout the state.”

Following the candidate’s remarks, commission members voted, and a tie was determined. Candidates were asked questions by commission members.

- **Should a new high-speed line be built between Chicago and St. Louis?**
 - Mr. Derwinski stated that from an operations standpoint if you want to go to true high speed it needs to be a new dedicated line. Mr. Derwinski provides California as an example to show the importance of planning and funding.
 - Mr. Harnish discussed the need to get from Chicago to St. Louis in under 3 hours.
- **How does your operations experience/perspective connect with the vision of the Commission?**
 - Mr. Derwinski stated that operationally you have to work within the means you have and with the current market. Mr. Derwinski’s background allows him to understand the compromise between building something that does not exist today and working within the existing network.
 - Mr. Harnish discussed how rails can change political dynamics and political discussions.

A revote took place and resulted in a tie. Absent committee members will be asked to vote to break the tie. The elected Chair will require 10 votes.

The same voting process will be used to determine the Vice Chair at the next meeting. It was noted that in the by-laws, Co-Chair will be replaced with Vice Chair.

VI. MISSION STATEMENT DISCUSSION

There was a discussion about the Commission's mission statement. Commission members discussed how other states commute and how other states view transit as a commuting option. A formal activity was suggested for commission members to provide ideas in order to craft a purposeful mission statement.

VII. OTHER

A commission member spoke on California's transit plan, the existing rails that interconnect Illinois, and how rails can connect cities, communities, universities, etc. Community members further discussed this concerning the mission statement.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT

The meeting was open to public comment. No public comments were made.

IX. ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.